

## IN MEMORIAM: Victor Sunday Alumona, 1958-2022

Victor Sunday Alumona, age 63, a Reader (Associate Professor) in and acting head of the Department of Philosophy, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, died on 11<sup>th</sup> May, 2022 V.S. Alumona was born in Nguru, Nsukka, Enugu State in the Eastern Nigeria. He had his elementary education in Nsukka and moved to the western Nigeria in 1977 in pursuit of tertiary education. He obtained the Bachelor of Arts Degree in Philosophy in 1981; Master of Arts Degree in Philosophy in 1986; and obtained his Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy in 1997, from the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.

Alumona started his career in academics in 1982 shortly after the completion of the mandatory National Youth Service Corps programme, which he had at Bichi Teachers' College, Kano (Northern Nigeria) between 1981 and 1982. He joined the Department of Philosophy, University of Ife, (now Obafemi Awolowo University) in 1982 as a graduate assistant, and immediately proceeded into the Master of Arts programme in Philosophy, specialising in History of Philosophy, with special emphasis on Greek Philosophy. Alumona's Master's thesis was titled "Political Decline and Varieties of Intellectual Reactions in Post-Aristotelian Philosophy", and his Ph.D dissertation was titled "Skepticism and the Practice of Rhetoric in Protagoras Gorgias". As obvious from the above, Alumona's area of speciality in Greek Philosophy is the interface between scepticism and the practice of rhetoric in Protagoras and Gorgias, the two famous sophists, each of whom Plato immortalized in two dedicatory dialogues: the *Protagoras* and *Gorgias*.

Against this background, his research and publications are grouped into four: (i) Greek Philosophical Rhetoric, (ii) Cultural criticism, deploying concepts and theories of Greek origin, (iii) Socio-political analyses and discussions, and (iv) deployment of

rhetorical concepts for interrogating literary works. In the first group, and with regard to Protagoras, one of his early publications, “Protagoras’s *Homo Mensura* Dictum and the Possibility of Rhetoric”<sup>1</sup> shows that *contra* Plato and Aristotle, Protagoras raised the Man-Measure dictum, also known as *homo mensura* dictum (HMD), without regard to absolute truth, in order to allow the sophists practice rhetoric from the relativist stand point, without which the practice of rhetoric would be impossible. In other publications in this trend, Alumona identified and characterised the specific types of *ad hominem* arguments in Plato’s *Protagoras*, and how the major interlocutors in the dialogue, used them to gain advantage over the other in the rhetorical duels of the dialogue<sup>2</sup>. Specifically, in “The Rhetoric of Unity and the Quest for Political Power in Nigeria”, Alumona showed how Protagoras Myth, harbours a unique *flow chart type of argument* to maintain transient scepticism, rather than risk universal scepticism into which Socrates intended to drag him using rhetorical technics like, ‘salient possibilities’ and ‘possible defeators’<sup>3</sup>. With regard to Gorgias, Alumona’s publications have demonstrated how Gorgias extended his nihilism to Greek social class distinctions and conception of justice<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, by treating the Greek intelligentsia as “lovers of wisdom”, the original sense of Philosophy, Alumona identified some new historiographical concepts relevant to interpreting historical events, such as Empedocles’ *chaotic-linear* theory, the atomists’ *chaotic structuralism*, Herodotus’ *conventional*

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<sup>1</sup> Alumona, V.S. (1999). “Protagoras’ *Homo Mensura* Dictum and the Possibility of Rhetoric”. *Philosophical Transactions*. Vol.1, No. 1. pp.13 – 20

<sup>2</sup> Alumona, V. S. (2013). “Corruption and anti-corruption strategies: Nigeria’s Recent Experience”. In Obiyan A. S. and Amuwo K. (eds.) *Nigeria’s Democratic Experience in the Fourth Republic since 1999: Policies and Politics*, Lanham Maryland: University Press of America, pp.311-327.

<sup>3</sup> Alumona, V.S. (2006). “The Rhetoric of Unity and the Quest for Political Power in Nigeria”. *African and Asian Studies*. Vol. 5, No.2, pp.171-191.

<sup>4</sup> Alumona, V.S. (2005). “Gorgias’ Skepticism Regarding Justice in the Epitaphios (DK82 B52a)”. *Quest: African Journal of Philosophy*. No. 1-2, pp. 49- 62.

*anthropocentrism* and the thesis that the sophists' *equally poised double argument principle* in historical interpretation and accounts, which is a democratic rule demanding balance in historical reportage<sup>5</sup>.

The focus of the second group of research of Alumona is on socio-cultural discourse and criticism. In this regard, Alumona deployed majorly Greek concepts and theories to analyse and discuss cultural patterns and some Nigerian literary works, with resounding results. In some other publications, Alumona advanced the resilience of indigenous institutions to addressing several cultural ills, restoring relationship between known and unknown and advancing moral virtues.<sup>6</sup> Alumona's works in other areas of intellectual endeavour revolved round critical engagement of social and political issues. For instance, by a critical study of the inaugural speeches of past Nigerian leaders, Alumona attempted to justify the claim of insincerity of Nigerian leaders, military or civilian, in the fight against corruption<sup>7</sup>. Continuing on this path, Alumona also showed that Amilcar Cabral's historiography is a backdrop for criteria of citizenship, equality and justice<sup>8</sup>. In advancing his conviction of the intervention of a philosopher in the interpretation, analysis and understanding of socio-cultural cum political discourses, Alumona collaborated with other scholars to address on

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<sup>5</sup> Alumona, V. S. (2011). "A Critical Rhetoric Appraisal of Ojukwu's Ahiara Declaration." *African Identities*, Vol. 9, No. 1, Feb. 2011, Taylor and Francis Group, Abingdon, pp. 67-84

<sup>6</sup> See Alumona, V.S. (2003). "Culture and Societal Institutions in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*: A Critical Reading". *Journal of Humanities*. Vol. 17, 2003, pp. 62– 81 and Alumona, V. S. (2013). "Hubris, Physis, and Eironeia in Ola Rotimi's *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi*. *Afrev Laligens: An International Journal of Language, Literature and Gender Studies*. Vol. 2, Serial No.6. 203-217

<sup>7</sup> Alumona V. S. (2008). "The Rhetoric of Corruption and the Quest for Political Power in Nigeria". In Babawale T. and Ogen O. (eds.) *Culture and Society in Nigeria: Popular Culture, Language and Intergroup Relations*. Lagos: Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilisations, pp.117-145

<sup>8</sup> Alumona, V. S. (2018). "Gender Equality in Amilcar Cabral's Education Policy". *Papers in English and Linguistics (PEL)*. Vol 19, Nos 3,4 Sept & Dec 2018, pp. 19-44

on the Niger Delta question<sup>9</sup> and also on the relation between human nature and corruption in Africa.<sup>10</sup> In the former, he provided the socio-political theoretical plank for discussing and analysing the issues raised therein. In the latter he provided the urbanization theory that explained the emergence of ethnic irredentist and parochial sentiments that colour perceptions of public officials' financial improprieties as heroic, and also the deployment of Leibniz's identity of indiscernible theory as a critic of reincarnation belief of some Africans. From the above, it is safe to assert that Dr. V.S. Alumona has made indelible imprint in philosophy through his publications.

Dr. V.S. Alumona's contribution to the pedagogy of history of philosophy in the Department of Philosophy, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife is quite remarkable. He was the principal teacher in most of the courses in History of Philosophy both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Dr. Alumona's teaching manuals had become the template for colleagues teaching courses in the history of philosophy. He has supervised several graduate students many of who are in some major universities and research institutes making waves in research in the history of philosophy. He served as the Copy Editor of *Second Order: An African Journal of Philosophy* since its resuscitation in 2019. He ensured that each edition of the journal underwent thorough scrutiny before publication. As Acting Head of Department, Dr. Alumona would be remembered for being a selfless, purposeful, stabilising and fair leader.

Adieu, dear colleague.

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<sup>9</sup> Alumona, V.S. (1988). "Ala as Collective Conscience in Igbo Morality": *The Nigerian Journal of Philosophy*. Vol.8, Nos. 1 & 2, pp. 23-33

<sup>10</sup> Fasiku, G and Alumona, V. S. (2018). "Human Nature, Corruption and African Social Order". *South African Journal of Philosophy*. Vol. 37, Issue 3, 2018, pp. 335-346

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